CANADA MANPOWER - ALBERTA

CONFLICT AREAS

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Kenneth A. Svenson

Second Revision, September, 1971

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Introduction

Programs offered by Canada Manpower fall into three major categories. These are:

1. Job Placement
2. Occupational Training
3. Mobility Assistance

Job placement is the process of matching employers demands for labour with the skills of potential employees. This is done by a Canada Manpower counsellor through an interview - classification - referral procedure. Under the occupational training category are a number of programs related to training. These are listed below:

(a) Occupation training - these are courses intended to increase a person's earning or employment potential. This includes academic upgrading but does exclude technical and university education. It cannot exceed 52 weeks duration (by legislation).

(b) Training in industry - these are training courses developed to train, retrain, or upgrade the skills of an industry employee for a specific employer. An agreement is developed between the employer and Canada Manpower in which Canada Manpower provides financial assistance to an employer to train his employees.

(c) Training allowances - Canada Manpower will pay an allowance covering living expenses for those people they have placed in a course and when they are otherwise eligible for the allowance.

(d) Other programs under the Occupational Training Act, are grants for research and loans for training facilities.

In order to assist in the effectiveness of the above programs, Canada Manpower also operates a mobility and immigration program which assists people to move from one location to another in order to secure employment.

Another aspect of the Canada Manpower operation is the "purchase process". Canada Manpower in Winnipeg (Alberta is in a region which also includes Saskatchewan and Manitoba) purchases "places' in courses supplied mostly by the Alberta Department of Education. These "purchases" are made

in advance of any course registration by a client. The Winnipeg office has control over "purchasing" and no client can be placed in a course for which a "purchase" has not been previously arranged. The counsellor in the local Canada Manpower Centre has control over which individuals receive the benefit of these "purchased places". Before a person can be placed in a course he must have an "occupational goal". If this goal is University Training or any course of more than 52 weeks duration, then he is not eligible for Canada Manpower assistance. There is an exception to this rule in the training of vocational or guidance teachers.

Assumptions & Philosophy

Observations of the operations of Canada Manpower programs seem to indicate that the following items are included in the assumptions upon which the operations are based:

1. The economy (as represented by the employers) has priority over people. Canada Manpower, in its employment placement program places emphasis on finding employees for employers and not jobs for potential employees. One evidence of this in their advertising which is most always aimed at attracting employees. One exception to this is the attempt to stimulate employment opportunities for students during the past summer. Another aspect of this assumption is that the "purchase process" is based on attempts to forecast employer needs not employee needs for training.
2. The economy and therefore the job market is "given". The comments about the above item also apply here. No attempt is made to manipulate the job market either in terms of stimulating development or adjusting the composition of the job market. This assumption also arises out of the legislation.
3. The most important factor in a persons inability to secure employment is lack of saleable skills. This assumption is evident in the Occupational Training Act which restricts Canada Manpower to purchasing "occupational training". In its operations Canada Manpower has attempted to deal with this restriction by insisting that only "ready clients" are eligible for their assistance. A "ready client" is one with no other problems except lack of skills.

4. Canada is the unit of concern. Although considerations are given to regional problems and the legislation (A.O.T.A. section 12 subsection 2) makes some consideration of such regional units possible, the emphasis is on adjustments to the Canadian labour force not to any single regional labour force. This is a natural inclination for a federal program.
5. People are mobile. This assumption also related to items 2 and 3 above. It is assumed that people will move from one area to another as the job market changes and that if training is necessary that people will move to where training is available.

These assumptions and consequent methods of operation lead to areas of conflict and disagreement with provincial agencies and potential clients.

Areas of Conflict with Provincial Agencies

There are a number of areas of conflict or potential conflict with the province. One of the most obvious is the suspicion by the province that the federal government is attempting to push into the education field which is a provincial jurisdiction. The more Canada Manpower requests certain types of courses in specific places and the more detail they require in courses, the more the Alberta Department of Education feels that their jurisdiction is being encroached upon.

A second conflict area arises out of the national concern of Canada Manpower. Alberta may have problems which it would like to solve through programs of Canada Manpower. As an example there may be an unemployment problem in a region which could be solved by retraining for employment in some other Alberta industry which has a labour shortage. However, there may be unemployed people in Saskatchewan who have the necessary skills. Because Canada Manpower has the national concern their priority would be to move Saskatchewan people to those jobs.

The purchasing process also leads to some frustration and conflict. The agreement between Canada and the Province states that Canada Manpower must spend at least 90% of the previous years expenditures in any one year. This does not mean that they must purchase the same mix of courses as in the previous year. Canada Manpower attempts to base their purchases on forecasts of job demand which the province may or may not agree with. Some

attempt is being made this year in the form of the OTA-13 Technical Sub-committee to involve the province in the forecasts so that the province will agree with purchases. This may help a little in reaching agreements but since Canada Manpower assumes that the training should be adjusted to projected labour demand (see above assumptions) and Alberta seems to assume that training should be adjusted to meet the needs of people in reaching their maximum potential, Alberta will probably still not agree with the purchases requested by Canada Manpower. Canada Manpower also has limits on its funds and in purchasing places there is a feeling that Canada Manpower tends to purchase in lower cost courses, leaving Alberta to pay the bill for the high cost areas.

Another area of frustration is "surprise money" as it is called by the Alberta Department of Education. Last year, as an example, Canada Manpower acquired, late in the year, a large amount of money to be spent in training prior to the end of the fiscal year. Because Alberta has not budgeted, planned, or allocated staff and facilities to these demands, confusion is created.

There is a difference of opinion on the interpretation of section 4, paragraph 9 of the Occupational Training for Adults agreement of 1967. Part of this paragraph reads:

> "Canada will endeavour to arrange the enrollment in <u>suitable</u> occupational training courses of <u>all</u> adults in the Province who wish to undertake such training and for whom there exists a good prospect of their earnings being substantially increased as a result of training...." (underline added by author for emphasis).

Alberta would like to interpret the paragraph as meaning that all adults who wish to enter into training should be assisted if the training will enhance the possibility of their earnings being increased. This would be limited only by the "52 weeks" course length as stipulated in the legislation. Canada Manpower seems to interpret "occupational training" in a very narrow sense which excludes such items as "literacy" training and so can exclude people with "less than grade 5" from academic upgrading.

The federal-provincial agreement also states that before arranging a training in industry contracts that the Department of Education be consulted. There is a difference between the two agencies on the interpretation of what constitutes a "consultation". The Department of Education seems

to feel they should approve the contract while Canada Manpower seems to feel that notification is sufficient.

The Alberta Department of Education is also annoyed at the fact that sometimes they do not know the specific requirements of the people who will occupy the "place" purchased by Canada Manpower until the student comes to class on the first day of the course. This makes it extremely difficult to schedule classes which are correlated with student needs. This may be alleviated if Alberta added a week to the length of the course and made the first week an orientation week.

Areas of Conflict with Clients

There are also a number of areas of conflict and misunderstanding with clients. In the job-placement phase of the services offered by Canada Manpower clients tend to expect that the Canada Manpower Center will find them a job. The orientation of Canada Manpower is to help find employees for employers and not employers for potential employees. As noted above, the advertising done by Canada Manpower is generally to attract potential employees not potential employers. The training done by Canada Manpower has as its goal the supply of competent labour to employers to meet the needs of the people in the area served by the Canada Manpower Centre. Clients become discouraged when their "names are put on file in case something turns up". This leads to frustrations expressed by some of the newspaper clippings attached to this document.

Several aspects of the occupational training programs lead to frustration on the part of the clients. The idea that no one under grade 5 can enter the program beings frustration by some. This avenue of assistance is blocked to a group of people who probably "need" assistance the most The policy of accepting only "ready clients" again discriminates against a group who have high priority in terms of "need". The frustration generated by these requirements is also illustrated in one of the attached newspaper clippings. The failure of multi-problem clients is virtually assured by the lack of other supporting services which even if Canada Manpower cannot supply directly, could be supplied by some other organizations if Canada Manpower would take some initiative to see that clients were put in contact with other organizations. The narrow interpretation of "occupational training" leads to an attitude which ignores other needs an individual may have which must be met in order to achieve success in training or

employment.

The "occupational goal" concept of Canada Manpower is also frustrating to a client. In order to be accepted for any training course the client must have an occupational goal which does not involve a training course of more than 52 weeks. However, in practice, 52 weeks of upgrading and 52 weeks of skill training are allowed. People who want upgrading for such an occupational training program are acceptable, but people desiring to enter University or a Technical school following upgrading do not qualify. If a person enters an upgrading program with an occupation goal that fits the requirements of Canada Manpower and finds, part way through the course, that he has an apitude for academic subjects he may want to change his goal and go to University. If he does so he will cease to receive manpower assistance. People must either pretend to maintain the original occupational goal or be prepared to "got it alone".

The "counselling" part of the Canada Manpower program is in a dilemma similar to counsellors in any other agency which had programs attached to it. The "counsellors" job in these agencies is to judge which client fits the requirements of the program not which program fits the needs of the client. This means that if a potential client does not meet the requirements of a program that he has failed. This tends to confirm the image which people in poverty situations have about themselves. This situation also affects the "counsellor" because instead of being a "counsellor" to people as the clients tend to expect, he is a "counsellor" to the agency or program. There is no effective means of appeal from the decision of a counsellor.

Recommendations

The recommendations which follow should be considered as alternatives or general directions to receive additional exploration and clarification. The final logical implications of some of these suggestions have not been explored and this should be done prior to any commitment to action.

There are two opposing directions in which remedial action could be taken. One direction is to attempt to pressure Canada Manpower to change its orientation so that it is more compatible with the Alberta orientation and the other direction is for Alberta to decide to "go it alone" if necessary and only use Canada Manpower when the programs are compatible and

when it is convenient. The first alternative is not entirely feasible because there are some things that cannot be changed (eg. the national orientation) and some of the other things would tend to extend the power of the federal government in the province. The second alternative is also painful in the potential loss of federal funds. The final solution will probably be a compromise but the two alternatives should be explored in order to give clarity to a compromise.

Some of the items which might fall under changes in Canada Manpower would be:

1. Obtain a regional office for Alberta only. This would not eliminate the National orientation but would tend to temper it with more consideration of the Alberta situation than is now received with a regional office in Winnipeg.
2. Induce Canada Manpower to pay for "people" rather than "places" in the training institutions. Adults wishing to take training would apply to the training institution and if he was accepted then he could apply to Canada Manpower for assistance. If he qualified for assistance then Canada Manpower would pay all expenses related to his education. This would eliminate arguments over which courses should be purchased, etc. Projections as to amounts of money from Canada to Alberta could be projected relatively easily after 1 or 2 years.
3. Persuade Canada Manpower to pay for all academic upgrading for adults no matter what the occupational goal and no matter what the original grade level of the client is. It has been statistically demonstrated that additional grade levels improve earning power. Canada Manpower uses these statistics to persuade young people to stay in school. If this type of education (which is paid for by the province) is worthwhile for young people it should also enhance the earning power of adults (and should be paid for by Canada Manpower).

Some of the changes that could be implemented in the Alberta situation are:

1. The policy decision could be made that all training which received Alberta approval would be instituted even if Canada Manpower did not support it. This would shift the onus from one of Alberta trying to sell training to Canada Manpower to one of Canada Manpower trying to purchase training from Alberta. This should also apply

to the training allowance situation. This would remove much of the frustration, uncertainty and delay involved in such special training courses such as the one proposed for Grande Cache. It would also mean that Vocational Training would need to include a special fund in its budget for such special courses. This item coupled with item 2 below should give Alberta a better relative position when negotiating with Canada Manpower

Alberta already has a program which would make this possible but Canada Manpower regulations must be interpreted by the Department of Education in order to implement it. The program or individual must be unacceptable for Canada Manpower assistance if the Alberta program is to be used. Alberta does not have any cost-sharing arrangements under the present program. One method of alleviating the cost-sharing problem whould be to make the Department of Education an "agent" of the Department of Social Development. There is a possibility that training allowances could then be paid under C.A.P.

2. Establish an Alberta Manpower Committee composed of all departments associated with adult training or employment. The committee should include Education, Labour, Health & Social Development, Agriculture and perhaps other departments. The committee would review Alberta needs in employment, training and other manpower matters and would develop recommendations for action by Alberta to alleviate problems in manpower matters and develop recommendations for Alberta to take to the Federal Government.
3. Alberta should set up a counselling service which is independent of any "program loyalties". The only loyalties would be to clients. These counsellors would co-ordinate all programs needed by a client to ensure his success in employment seeking, occupational training, and employment. This counselling service should be mandatory for all people referred to training in Alberta by Canada Manpower. This type of service would reduce client frustration in job-seeking, finding the most appropriate solution to their problems and ensure a more efficient use of training facilities due to fewer "failures".

4. Alberta should institute classes related to social adjustment and social problems which are available to any adult receiving occupational training upon referral by a counsellor from the program mentioned above. If Canada Manpower will not support such a course as part of the training, Alberta should pay for it. This would recognize that there are more sides to an individual than that oriented to skills or employment and would improve the success of multi-problem clients in training programs.